

LETTER

TO THE

HON. HENRY CLAY,

A. S. COOPER,

ANNEXATION OF TEXAS TO THE UNITED STATES.

BY WILLIAM E. COOPER,

BOSTON,

JAMES MCGRAW & CO., PUBLISHERS,

1837.

LETTER.

My DEAR SIR,

I TRUST, that you will excuse the liberty which I take in thus publicly addressing you. If you could look into my heart, I am sure you would not condemn me. You would discover the motives of this act, in my respect for your eminent powers, and in my confidence that you are disposed to use them for the honor and happiness of your country. Were you less distinguished, or less worthy of distinction, I should not trouble you with this letter. I write you, because I am persuaded, that your great influence, if exerted in promoting just views on the subject of this communication, would accomplish a good, to which, perhaps, no other man in the country is equal. I am bound in frankness, to add another reason for addressing you. I hope that your name, prefixed to this letter, may secure to it an access to some, perhaps to many, who would turn away, were its thoughts presented in a more general form. Perhaps by this aid, it may scale the barrier, which now excludes from the South a certain class of the writings of the North. I am sure your hospitality would welcome me to Kentucky; and your well-known generosity, I believe, will consent that I should use your name, to gain a hearing in that and the neighboring states.

It is with great reluctance that I enter on the topic of this letter. My tastes and habits incline me to very differ-

995

ent objects of thought and exertion. I had hoped, that I should never again feel myself called to take part in the agitations and exciting discussions of the day, especially in those of a political character. I desire nothing so much as to devote what remains of life, to the study and exposition of great principles and universal truths. But the subject of Texas weighs heavily on my mind, and I cannot shake it off. To me, it is more than a political question. It belongs eminently to morals and religion. I have hoped, that the attention of the public would be called to it by some more powerful voice. I have postponed writing, until the national legislature is about to commence the important session, in which, it is thought, this subject may be decided. But no one speaks, and therefore I cannot be silent. Should Texas be annexed to our country, I feel that I could not forgive myself, if, with my deep, solemn impressions, I should do nothing to avert the evil. I cannot easily believe, that this disastrous measure is to be adopted, especially at the present moment. The annexation of Texas under existing circumstances, would be more than rashness; it would be madness. That opposition to it must exist at the South, as well as at the North, I cannot doubt. Still, there is a general impression, that great efforts will be made to accomplish this object at the approaching session of Congress, and that nothing but strenuous resistance can prevent their success. I must write, therefore, as if the danger were real and imminent; and if any should think that I am betrayed into undue earnestness by a false-alarm, they will remember that there are circumstances, in which excess of vigilance is a virtue.

In the course of this discussion, I shall be forced to speak on one topic, which can hardly be treated so as to give no offence. I am satisfied that in this, as in all cases, it is best, safest, as well as most right and honorable, to

speak freely and plainly. Nothing is to be gained by caution, circumlocution, plausible softenings of language, and other arts, which, in destroying confidence, defeat their own end. In discussions of an irritating nature, the true way of doing good is, to purify ourselves from all unworthy motives, to cherish disinterested sentiments and unaffected good-will towards those from whom we differ, and then to leave the mind to utter itself naturally and spontaneously. How far I have prepared myself for my work, by this self-purification, it becomes not me to say; but this I may say, that I am not conscious of the slightest asperity of feeling towards any party or any individual. I have no private interests to serve, no private passions to gratify. The strength of my conviction may be expressed in strong, perhaps unguarded language; but this want of caution is the result of the consciousness, that I have no purpose or feeling which I need conceal.

I shall, in one respect, depart from the freedom of a letter. I shall arrange my thoughts under distinct heads, and I shall do this, because I wish to put my reader in full possession of my views. I wish to use no vague declamation, to spread no vague alarm, but to bring out as clearly as possible the precise points of objection to the measure I oppose.*

* It may be well to state the principal authorities on which I rely for the statements in this letter. I am most indebted perhaps to an article on Mexico and Texas, in the July number of the North American Review for the year 1836. This article, as I understood at the time, was written by an enlightened and respected citizen of the South. The quotations in the first head of this letter, without a marginal reference, are taken from this tract, with a few unimportant exceptions. I have also made use of a pamphlet, bearing the title of the "War in Texas," written by Mr. Benjamin Lundy, a man of unimpeachable character, and who professes to have given particular attention to the subject. With his reasonings and opinions, I have nothing

We have a strong argument against annexing Texas to the United States, in the Criminality of the revolt which threatens to sever that country from Mexico. On this point our citizens need light. The Texan insurrection is seriously regarded by many among us as a struggle of the oppressed for freedom. The Texan revolution is thought to resemble our own. Our own is contaminated by being brought into such relationship, and we owe to our fathers and ourselves, a disclaimer of affinity with this new republic. The Texan revolt, if regarded in its causes and its means of success, is criminal; and we ought in no way to become parties in its guilt. You, I doubt not, are familiar with its history; but for the benefit of some, into whose hands this letter may fall, I will give the leading facts.

The first grant of land in Texas to our citizens, was made under the Royal Government; and in accepting it, the obligation was expressly incurred, of submission to the civil and religious despotism which then crushed the country. It was understood, that the settlers were to adopt the Catholic faith, and to conform in all other respects to the institutions of Mexico. Under the revolutionary governments, which succeeded the fall of the Spanish power, the

to do; but his statement of facts has been represented to me as worthy of full credit. I have also consulted a "History of Texas, by David B. Edwards." I know not that this has furnished me any thing of importance. But, by its undesigned coincidence, it corroborates the preceding articles. My chief reliance, however, is not on books, but on the notoriety of the facts here given, which may be considered as a testimony borne to them by the whole people. This is a singularly unexceptionable testimony in the present case; because it is well known, that the advocates of the Texan revolt have had possession, to a great degree, of the press of this country, and unfavorable accounts could not have obtained general currency, without a foundation in truth. Let me add, that by "the North," I understand in this letter all the free states, and by "the South," all the slaveholding states, except where the terms are plainly restricted by the connexion.

original grant was confirmed, and new ones made, on condition of subjection to the laws of the land. The terms were very liberal, except that adherence to the Catholic religion was required as the condition of settlement. These facts will help us to understand the reasonableness of some of the complaints, under which the colonists seek to shelter their revolt.

Mexico, on declaring her independence on the mother country, established a republican government, and was unfortunately betrayed by her admiration of this country into the adoption of a Federal system, for which no foundation had been laid in her previous history. From this cause, added to her inexperience in self-government, and to the want of intelligence among the mass of her population, her institutions have yielded very imperfectly the fruits of freedom. The country has been rent by factions, the capital convulsed by revolutions, and the chief office of the state been secured by the military to popular chieftains. The emigrants from this country to Texas, went with open eyes, with full knowledge of the unsettled state of affairs, into this region of misrule and agitation. Happily their distance from the seat of government prevented their being drawn into the whirlpool of civil contests, which threatened at times the destruction of the metropolis. Whilst the city of Mexico was pillaged, or laid under martial law, Texas found security in her remoteness; and, had her colonists proved loyal citizens, this security might have been undisturbed.

Complaints of one another, soon sprung up between the General Government and Texas. Mexico complained of the gross infraction of her laws, and Texas of the violence of the means by which it was attempted to enforce them. That both parties had ground of reproach, we cannot doubt; nor is it easy to strike the balance between them;

or to say where the chief blame lies. The presumption is strong, that the fault began with the colonists. We of this country, receiving our accounts of the controversy from Texans, are in danger of being warped in our judgments. But we have for our guidance, our knowledge of human nature, which helps us to construe the testimony of interested witnesses, and which, in the present case, cannot easily deceive us. If we consider the distance of Texas from the seat of government, her scattered population, her vicinity to a slave country, the general character of the first settlers in a wilderness, and the difficulty of subjecting them to regular tribunals; can we doubt for a moment, that Mexico had cause for the complaints, which she urged, of the gross infractions and evasions of her laws in Texas, especially of the laws relating to revenue, and to the exclusion of slaves? On the other hand, if we consider the circumstances of Mexico, can we doubt, that the military force sent by her to Texas, and needed there to enforce the laws, abused its power more or less? That lawless men should be put down by lawless means, especially in a country swept by the spirit of revolution, is an effect too common and natural to excite wonder. The wonder is that Texas escaped with so little injury. Whether she would have suffered at all, had she submitted in good faith to the laws which she had pledged herself to obey, may be fairly questioned. I ask you, Sir, whether it is not your deliberate conviction, that Mexico, from the beginning of her connexion with the colonists, has been more sinned against than sinning. But allowing that the violent means, used by Mexico for enforcing her authority, were less provoked than we believe them to have been; did not the Texans enter the country with a full knowledge of its condition? Did they not become citizens of a state, just entered into the school of free-

dom, which had been inured, for ages to abuses of military power, and whose short republican history had been made up of civil agitation? In swearing allegiance to such a state, did they not consent to take their chance of the evils, through which it must have been expected to pass in its way to firm and free institutions? Was there, or could there be in so unsettled a society, that deliberate, settled, inflexible purpose of spoiling the colonists of their rights, which alone absolves a violation of allegiance from the guilt of treason.

Some of the grounds, on which the Texans justify their conflict for independence, are so glaringly deficient in truth and reason, that it is hard to avoid suspicion of every defence set up for their revolt. They complain of being denied the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences; and this they do, though they entered the country and swore allegiance to its government, with full knowledge that the Catholic religion was the religion of the State and alone tolerated by the constitution. What increases the hollowness and criminality of the pretence, is, that notwithstanding the provision of the constitution, protestant sects had held their meetings undisturbed in Texas, and no persecution had ever taken place on account of difference of creed.

Another grievance by which they justify their revolt is, that the trial by jury had been withheld; and this complaint they have the courage to make, although they were fully aware, before becoming the adopted citizens of the country, that this mode of trial was utterly unknown to its jurisprudence, and though, in the constitution of the State of Coahuila and Texas, the following article had been introduced. "One of the principal subjects for the attention of Congress [State Legislature] shall be to establish in criminal cases the trial by jury, extending it gradually, and even

adopting it in civil cases, in proportion as the advantages of this precious institution may be practically developed."

One of the greatest grievances in the eyes of Texas was the change of the Mexican government from a Federal to a Central or Consolidated form. But this change, however violently brought about, was ratified by the national Congress according to the rules prescribed by the constitution, and was sanctioned by the Mexican people. The decree of Congress, introducing this "reform" of the national institutions, declares the system of government "republican, popular, and representative," and provides all the organs by which such a government is characterized. What also deserves our consideration in estimating this measure is, that the whole history of Mexico has proved the necessity of substituting a Central for a Federal government. Liberty and order can be reconciled and preserved in that country by no process but by the introduction of more simple and efficient institutions. And yet the Texans, a handful of strangers, raised the standard of revolt, because the government was changed by a nation of nine millions without their consent.

I have spoken of the Texans as a handful of people. At the breaking out of the insurrection they were about twenty thousand, including women and children. They were of course wholly unable to achieve or maintain national independence; so that one condition, which is required to authorize revolution, namely the ability to sustain a government, to perform the duties of sovereignty, they could not pretend to fulfil. Twenty thousand men, women and children, raising the standard of war and proposing to dismember a mighty empire! It is very possible that there are suburbs of London, containing an equal number of discontented people, who suffer under and have reason to complain of municipal or national injustice. And may

these fly to arms, set up for a nation, and strive to break the unity of the British dominions? It should also be remembered, that the Texans were not only a drop of the bucket compared with the Mexican population, but that they were a decided minority in the particular state to which they belonged, so that their revolt may be compared to the rising of a county in Massachusetts or Virginia for the purpose of establishing a separate sovereignty, on the ground of some real or imagined violation of right on the part of the Federal or the State government. Still more, this little knot of Texans were far from being unanimous as to the revolt. The older and wealthier inhabitants favored peace. "There were great differences of opinion among the colonists, and even violent party dissensions. Many who were in the quiet enjoyment of their property were opposed to all these hostile movements. The first public declaration of independence was adopted, not by persons assuming to act in a representative capacity, but by about *ninety individuals*, all, except two, Americans, if we may judge by their names, acting for themselves and recommending a similar course to their fellow-citizens. That declaration furnishes proofs of the dissensions and jealousies of which we have spoken. — It proves another fact, that the ancient population of the province was favorable to the new views of the government of Mexico." In some letters written by Col. S. T. Austin, the founder of the colony, in the year 1834, whilst imprisoned in Mexico on the charge of encouraging revolutionary movements in Texas, we have some remarkable passages, showing the aversion of the sounder part of the population to violent measures. "I wish my friends and all Texas to adopt and firmly adhere to the motto and rule I have stated in this letter. The rule is, to discountenance in the most unequivocal and efficient manner all persons who are in the

habit of speaking or writing in violent or disrespectful terms of the Mexican people or authorities. — I have been led into so much difficulty, and Texas has been so much jeopardized in its true and permanent interests, by inflammatory men, political fanatics, political adventurers, would-be-great men, vain talkers, and visionary fools, that I begin to lose all confidence except for those who seek their living between the plough handles; and alas for them! they are too often sacrificed before they know it. — Tolerate no more violent measures and you will prosper, and obtain from the government all that reasonable men ought to ask for."* It is very plain that of this diminutive colony the more reasonable men, had they not been overborne by the more violent, would have averted the civil war. Such was the number which set up for a nation!

I have no disposition to deny that Texas had grievances to justify complaint. In proof of this I need no documents. That she was not always wisely governed, that her rights were not always respected, who can doubt? What else could be expected? Mexico is not wise. Mexico is not skilled in the science of human rights. Her civilization is very imperfect, as we and the Texans have always known; and a good government is one of the slowest fruits of civilization. In truth a good government exists nowhere. The errors and vices of rulers entail evils on every state. Especially in an extensive community, some districts will always suffer from unwise, partial, unjust legislation. If every town or county may start up into a sovereign state, whenever it is wronged, society will be given up to perpetual convulsion, and history be one bloody record of revolt. The right of insurrection is to be exercised most rarely, fearfully, reluctantly, and only in cases of fixed,

* History of Texas, p. 310. Austin's Correspondence.

pronounced, persevering oppression, from which no relief can be found but in force. Nothing is easier than for any and every people to draw up a list of wrongs; nothing more ruinous, than to rebel because every claim is not treated with respect. The United States did not throw off the British yoke; because every human right, which could be demonstrated by moral science, was not granted them; but because they were denied the rights which their fathers had enjoyed, and which had been secured to the rest of the empire. They began with pleading precedent. They took their first stand on the British constitution. They claimed the rights of Englishmen. They set up the case of peculiar oppression; and did not appeal to arms, until they had sought redress for years by patient and respectful remonstrance; until they had exhausted every means of conciliation which wisdom could devise or a just self-respect would allow. Such was the code of national morality to which our fathers bowed; and in so doing they acknowledged the sacredness of allegiance, and manifested their deep conviction of the fearful responsibility of subverting a government and of rupturing national ties. A province, in estimating its grievances, should have respect to the general condition of the country to which it belongs. A colony, emigrating from a highly civilized country, has no right to expect in a less favored state the privileges it has left behind. The Texans must have been insane, if, on entering Mexico, they looked for an administration as faultless as that under which they had lived. They might with equal reason have planted themselves in Russia, and then have unfurled the banner of independence near the throne of the Czar, because denied the immunities of their native land.

Having thus considered the grievances of the Texans, I now proceed to consider the real and great causes of the

revolt. These are matters of notoriety so as to need no minute exposition. The first great cause was the unbounded, unprincipled spirit of land speculation, which so tempting a prize as Texas easily kindled in multitudes in the United States, where this mode of gambling is too common a vice. Large grants of land in Texas were originally made to individuals, chiefly citizens of our country, who, in many cases, transferred their claims to joint-stock companies in some of our cities. A quotation will illustrate the nature of these grants and the frauds and speculations to which they gave birth, "The nominal grantee is called the *empresario*. He is considered by the terms of the contract, merely as a trustee of the government, having no title himself to the land within the limits of his future colony, except upon condition of settling a number of families [within a given time]. The settlers themselves receive a title for each family for a league square, upon the express condition of settlement and cultivation, and the payment of certain very moderate charges within a limited period. It is believed, that these conditions were by the colonization laws of Mexico the basis of all the land titles in Texas, together with the further condition, that all right and title should be forfeited, if the grantee [or new settler] should abandon the country, or sell his land before having cultivated it. An inspection of the various maps of Texas will show how numerous have been these privileges conceded to various *empresarios*. The face of the province from Neches to Red River and from the gulf to the mountains is nearly covered by them. It became at last a matter of greedy speculation; and it is a notorious fact, that many of the *empresarios*, forgetting the contingent character of their own rights to the soil, and the conditions upon which their future colonists were to receive allotments of land, proceeded at once to make

out scrip, which has been sold in the United States to an incalculable amount. In addition to this, we are informed on the best authority, that the manufacture of land titles, having no foundation whatever, has been carried on as a regular business. That frauds of these different kinds have been practised on the cupidity and credulity of the people of the United States, is beyond doubt. Had the close of the present campaign been what its opening seemed to portend, and the colonies been broken up, it would be impossible to calculate the losses which would be sustained by those who have never seen the land which they have bought. It is not hazarding too much to say, that millions have been expended in the Southern and South-western States."

Texas indeed has been regarded as a prey for land speculators within its own borders and in the United States. To show the scale on which this kind of plunder has been carried on, it may be stated, that the Legislature of Coahuila and Texas, in open violation of the laws of Mexico, were induced "by a company of land speculators, never distinctly known, to grant them, in consideration of twenty thousand dollars, the extent of four hundred square leagues of the public land.* This transaction was disavowed, and the grant annulled, by the Mexican government, and led to the dispersion of the legislature, and the imprisonment of the governor, Viesca. And yet this unauthorized, and perhaps corrupt grant of public lands formed the basis of new speculation and frauds. A new scrip was formed; and according to the best information we have been able to obtain, four hundred leagues became, in the hands of speculators, as many thousands. The extent of these frauds is yet to be ascertained; for such is the blindness of

* Another account says, 411 leagues for thirty thousand dollars.

cupidity, that any thing which looks fair on paper, passes without scrutiny, for a land title in Texas." The indignation excited in the Mexican government by this enormous grant, and the attempt to seize the legislators who perpetrated it, were among the immediate excitements to the revolt. In consequence of these lawless proceedings, great numbers in this country and Texas have nominal titles to land, which can only be substantiated by setting aside the authority of the General Congress of Mexico, and are of consequence directly and strongly interested in severing this province from the Mexican confederacy. Texan independence can alone legalize the mighty frauds of the land speculator. Texas must be wrested from the country to which she owes allegiance, that her soil may pass into the hands of cheating and cheated foreigners. We have here one explanation of the zeal, with which the Texan cause was embraced in the United States. From this country the great impulse has been given to the Texan revolution; and a principal motive has been, the unappeasable hunger for Texan land. An interest in that soil, whether real or fictitious, has been spread over our country. Thus "the general zeal for freedom" which has stirred and armed so many of our citizens to fight for Texas, turns out to be a passion for unrighteous spoil.

I proceed to another cause of the revolt, and this was the resolution to throw Texas open to slaveholders and slaves. Mexico, at the moment of throwing off the Spanish yoke, gave a noble testimony of her loyalty to free principles, by decreeing, "that no person thereafter should be born a slave or introduced as such into the Mexican States; that all slaves then held, should receive stipulated wages, and be subject to no punishment but on trial and judgment by the magistrate." The subsequent acts of the government carried out fully those constitutional provisions. It

is matter of deep grief and humiliation, that the emigrants from this country, whilst boasting of superior civilization, refused to second this honorable policy, intended to set limits to one of the greatest social evils. Slaves were brought into Texas with their masters from the neighboring States of this country. One mode of evading the laws was, to introduce slaves under formal indentures for long periods, in some cases it is said for ninety-nine years. By a decree of the State Legislature of Coahuila and Texas, all indentures for a longer period than ten years were annulled, and provision was made for the freedom of children born during this apprenticeship. This settled, invincible purpose of Mexico to exclude slavery from her limits created as strong a purpose to annihilate her authority in Texas. By this prohibition, Texas was virtually shut against emigration from the Southern and Western portions of this country; and it is well known that the eyes of the South and West had for some time been turned to this province, as a new market for slaves, as a new field for slave labor, and as a vast accession of political power to the slaveholding States. That such views were prevalent, we know; for, nefarious as they are, they found their way into the public prints. The project of dismembering a neighboring republic, that slaveholders and slaves might overspread a region which had been consecrated to a free population, was discussed in newspapers as coolly as if it were a matter of obvious right and unquestionable humanity. A powerful interest was thus created for severing from Mexico her distant province. We have here a powerful incitement to the Texan revolt, and another explanation of the eagerness, with which men and money were thrown from the United States into that region to carry on the war of revolution.

I proceed to another circumstance, which helped to determine or at least to hasten the insurrection; and that was the disappointment of the Texans in their efforts to obtain for themselves an organization as a separate state. Texas and Coahuila had hitherto formed a single State. But the colonists, being a minority in the joint legislature, found themselves thwarted in their plans. Impatient of this restraint, and probably suffering at times from a union which gave the superiority to others, they prepared for themselves a constitution, by which they were to be erected into a separate State, neglecting in their haste the forms prescribed by the Mexican law. This instrument they forwarded to the capital for the sanction of the General Congress, by whom it was immediately rejected. Its informality was a sufficient reason for its finding no better reception; but the omission of all provision to secure the country against slavery was a more serious obstacle to its ratification. The irritation of the Texans was great. Once invested with the powers of a State, they would not have found it difficult, in their remoteness from the capital and in the unsettled state of the nation, to manage their affairs in their own way. A virtual independence might have been secured, and the laws of Mexico evaded with impunity. Their exasperation was increased by the imprisonment of the agent who had carried the instrument to Mexico, and who had advised them, in an intercepted letter, to take matters into their own hands, or to organize a State Government without authority from the National Congress. Thus denied the privilege of a separate State, and threatened with new attempts on the part of the General Government to enforce the laws, they felt that the critical moment had arrived; and, looking abroad for help, resolved to take the chances of a conflict with the crippled power of Mexico.

Such were the chief excitements to the revolt. Undoubtedly, the Texans were instigated by the idea of wrongs, as well as by mercenary hopes. But had they yielded true obedience to the country of which they had, with their own free will, become a part; had they submitted to the laws relating to the revenue, to the sale of lands, and to slavery; the wrongs of which they complained might never have been experienced, or might never have been construed into a plea for insurrection. The great motives to revolt on which I have insisted are so notorious, that it is wonderful that any among us could be cheated into sympathy with the Texan cause, as the cause of freedom. Slavery and fraud lay at its very foundation. It is notorious, that land speculators, slaveholders, and selfish adventurers were among the foremost to proclaim and engage in the crusade for "Texan liberties." From the hands of these we are invited to receive a province, torn from a country to which we have given pledges of amity and peace.—In these remarks, I do not of course intend to say that every invader of Texas was carried thither by selfish motives. Some, I doubt not, were impelled by a generous interest in what bore the name of liberty; and more by that natural sympathy which incites a man to take part with his countrymen against a stranger, without stopping to ask whether they are right or wrong. But the motives, which rallied the great efficient majority round the standard of Texas, were such as have been exposed, and should awaken any sentiment but respect.

Having considered the motives of the revolution, I proceed to inquire, how was it accomplished? The answer to this question will show more fully the criminality of the enterprise. The Texans, we have seen, were a few thousands, as unfit for sovereignty as one of our towns; and, if left to themselves, must have utterly despaired

of achieving independence. They looked abroad; and to whom did they look? To any foreign state? To the government under which they had formerly lived? No; their whole reliance was placed on selfish individuals in a neighboring republic at peace with Mexico. They looked wholly to private individuals, to citizens of this country, to such among us, as, defying the laws of the land, and hungry for sudden gain, should be lured by the scent of this mighty prey, and should be ready to stain their hands with blood for spoil. They held out a country as a prize to the reckless, lawless, daring, avaricious, and trusted to the excitements of intoxicated imagination and insatiable cupidity, to supply them with partners in their scheme of violence.

By whom has Texas been conquered? By the colonists? By the hands which raised the standard of revolt? By foreign governments espousing their cause? No; it has been conquered by your and my countrymen, by citizens of the United States, in violation of our laws and of the laws of nations. We, we have filled the ranks which have wrested Texas from Mexico. In the army of eight hundred men who won the victory which scattered the Mexican force, and made its chief a prisoner, "not more than fifty were citizens of Texas having grievances of their own to seek relief from, on that field." The Texans in this warfare are little more than a name, a cover, under which selfish adventurers from another country have prosecuted their work of plunder.

Some crimes, by their magnitude, have a touch of the sublime; and to this dignity the seizure of Texas by our citizens is entitled. Modern times furnish no example of individual rapine on so grand a scale. It is nothing less than the robbery of a realm. The pirate seizes a ship. The colonists and their coadjutors can satisfy themselves

with nothing short of an empire. They have left their Anglo Saxon ancestors behind them. Those barbarians conformed to the maxims of their age, to the rude code of nations in time of thickest heathen darkness. They invaded England under their sovereigns, and with the sanction of the gloomy religion of the North. But it is in a civilized age, and amidst refinements of manners; it is amidst the lights of science and the teachings of Christianity, amidst expositions of the law of nations and enforcements of the law of universal love, amidst institutions of religion, learning, and humanity, that the robbery of Texas has found its instruments. It is from a free, well-ordered, enlightened Christian country, that hordes have gone forth in open day, to perpetrate this mighty wrong.

Let me now ask, are the United States prepared to receive from these hands the gift of Texas? In annexing it to this country, shall we not appropriate to ourselves the fruits of a rapine which we ought to have suppressed? We certainly should shrink from a proposition to receive a piratical state into our confederacy. And of whom does Texas consist? Very much of our own citizens, who have won a country by waging war against a foreign nation, to which we owed protection against such assaults. Does it consist with national honor, with national virtue, to receive to our embrace men who have prospered by crimes which we were bound to reprobate and repress?

Had this country resisted with its whole power the lawlessness of its citizens; had these, notwithstanding such opposition, succeeded in extorting from Mexico a recognition of independence; and were their sovereignty acknowledged by other nations, we should stand acquitted, in the sight of the civilized world, of participating in their crime, were considerations of policy to determine us to admit them into our Union. Unhappily the United States have

not discharged the obligation of a neutral State. They have suffered, by a culpable negligence, the violation of the Mexican territory by their citizens; and if now, in the midst of the conflict, whilst Mexico yet threatens to enforce her claims, they should proceed to incorporate Texas with themselves, they would involve themselves, before all nations, in the whole infamy of the revolt. The United States have not been just to Mexico. Our citizens did not steal singly, silently, in disguise into that land. Their purpose of dismembering Mexico, and attaching her distant province to this country, was not wrapt in mystery. It was proclaimed in our public prints. Expeditions were openly fitted out within our borders for the Texan war. Troops were organized, equipped, and marched for the scene of action. Advertisements for volunteers to be enrolled and conducted to Texas at the expense of that territory, were inserted in our newspapers. The government, indeed, issued its proclamation, forbidding these hostile preparations; but this was a dead letter. Military companies, with officers and standards, in defiance of proclamations, and in the face of day, directed their steps to the revolted province. We had, indeed, an army near the frontiers of Mexico. Did it turn back these invaders of a land with which we were at peace? On the contrary, did not its presence give confidence to the revolters? After this, what construction of our conduct shall we force on the world, if we proceed, especially at this moment, to receive into our Union the territory, which, through our neglect, has fallen a prey to lawless invasion? Are we willing to take our place among robber-states? As a people, have we no self-respect? Have we no reverence for national morality? Have we no feeling of responsibility to other nations, and to Him by whom the fates of nations are disposed?

II. Having unfolded the argument against the annexation of Texas from the criminality of the revolt, I proceed to a second very solemn consideration, namely, that by this act our country will enter on a career of encroachment, war, and crime, and will merit and incur the punishment and woe of aggravated wrong doing. The seizure of Texas will not stand alone. It will darken our future history. It will be linked by an iron necessity to long continued deeds of rapine and blood. Ages may not see the catastrophe of the tragedy, the first scene of which we are so ready to enact. It is strange that nations should be so much more rash than individuals; and this, in the face of experience, which has been teaching from the beginning of society, that, of all precipitate and criminal deeds, those perpetrated by nations are the most fruitful of misery.

Did this country know itself, or were it disposed to profit by self-knowledge, it would feel the necessity of laying an immediate curb on its passion for extended territory. It would not trust itself to new acquisitions. It would shrink from the temptation to conquest. We are a restless people, prone to encroachment, impatient of the ordinary laws of progress, less anxious to consolidate and perfect, than to extend our institutions, more ambitious of spreading ourselves over a wide space, than of diffusing beauty and fruitfulness over a narrower field. We boast of our rapid growth, forgetting that, throughout nature, noble growths are slow. Our people throw themselves beyond the bounds of civilization, and expose themselves to relapses into a semi-barbarous state, under the impulse of wild imagination, and for the name of great possessions. Perhaps there is no people on earth, on whom the ties of local attachment sit so loosely. Even the wandering tribes of Scythia are bound to one spot, the graves of their fathers; but the homes and graves of our fathers detain us feebly.

The known and familiar is often abandoned for the distant and untrodden; and sometimes the untrodden is not the less eagerly desired because belonging to others. We owe this spirit in a measure, to our descent from men, who left the old world for the new, the seats of ancient cultivation for a wilderness, and who advanced by driving before them the old occupants of the soil. To this spirit we have sacrificed justice and humanity, and, through its ascendancy, the records of this young nation are stained with atrocities, at which communities grown grey in corruption might blush.

It is full time, that we should lay on ourselves serious, resolute restraint. Possessed of a domain, vast enough for the growth of ages, it is time for us to stop in the career of acquisition and conquest. Already endangered by our greatness, we cannot advance without imminent peril to our institutions, union, prosperity, virtue, and peace. Our former additions of territory have been justified by the necessity of obtaining outlets for the population of the South and the West. No such pretext exists for the occupation of Texas. We cannot seize upon or join to ourselves that territory, without manifesting and strengthening the purpose of setting no limits to our empire. We give ourselves an impulse, which will and must precipitate us into new invasions of our neighbors' soil. Is it by pressing forward in this course that we are to learn self-restraint? Is cupidity to be appeased by gratification? Is it by unrighteous grasping, that an impatient people will be instructed how to hem themselves within the rigid bounds of justice?

Texas is a country conquered by our citizens; and the annexation of it to our Union will be the beginning of conquests, which, unless arrested and beaten back by a just and kind Providence, will stop only at the Isthmus of

Darien. Henceforth, we must cease to cry peace, peace. Our Eagle will whet, not gorge its appetite on its first victim; and will snuff a more tempting quarry, more alluring blood, in every new region which opens southward. To annex Texas, is to declare perpetual war with Mexico. That word, *Mexico*, associated in men's minds with boundless wealth, has already awakened rapacity. Already it has been proclaimed, that the Anglo Saxon race is destined to the sway of this magnificent realm, that the rude form of society, which Spain established there, is to yield and vanish before a higher civilization. Without this exposure of plans of rapine and subjugation, the result, as far as our will can determine it, is plain. Texas is the first step to Mexico. The moment we plant our authority on Texas, the boundaries of those two countries will become nominal, will be little more than lines on the sand of the seashore. In the fact, that portions of the Southern and Western States are already threatened with devastation, through the impatience of multitudes to precipitate themselves into the Texan land of promise, we have a pledge and earnest of the flood which will pour itself still farther south, when Texas shall be but partially overrun.

Can Mexico look without alarm on the approaches of this ever growing tide? Is she prepared to be a passive prey? to shrink and surrender without a struggle? Is she not strong in her hatred, if not in her fortresses or skill? Strong enough to make war a dear and bloody game? Can she not bring to bear on us a force, more formidable than fleets, the force of privateers, that is, of legalized pirates, which, issuing from her ports, will scour the seas, prey on our commerce, and add to spoliation, cruelty and murder?

Even were the dispositions of our government most pacific and opposed to encroachment, the annexation of Texas would almost certainly embroil us with Mexico.

This territory would be overrun by adventurers; and the most unprincipled of these, the proscribed, the disgraced, the outcasts of society, would, of course, keep always in advance of the better population. These would represent our republic on the borders of the Mexican States. The history of the connexion of such men with the Indians, forewarns us of the outrages, which would attend their contact with the border inhabitants of our southern neighbor. Texas, from its remoteness from the seat of government, would be feebly restrained by the authorities of the nation to which it would belong. Its whole early history would be a lesson of scorn for Mexico, an education for invasion of her soil. Its legislature would find in its position some color for stretching to the utmost the doctrine of state-sovereignty. It would not hear unmoved the cries for protection and vengeance, which would break from the frontier, from the very men whose lawlessness would provoke the cruelties so indignantly denounced; nor would it sift very anxiously the question, on which side the wrong began. To the wisdom, moderation, and tender mercies of the back-settlers and law-givers of Texas, the peace of this country would be committed.

Have we counted the cost of establishing and making perpetual these hostile relations with Mexico? Will wars, begun in rapacity, carried on so far from the centre of the confederation, and, of consequence, little checked or controlled by Congress, add strength to our institutions, or cement our union, or exert a healthy moral influence on rulers or people? What limits can be set to the atrocities of such conflicts? What limits to the treasures, which must be lavished on such distant borders? What limits to the patronage and power, which such distant expeditions must accumulate in the hands of the Executive? Are the blood and hard-earned wealth of the older states to be

poured out like water, to protect and revenge a new people, whose character and condition will plunge them into perpetual wrongs?

Is the time never to come, when the neighborhood of a more powerful and civilized people, will prove a blessing instead of a curse to an inferior community? It was my hope, when the Spanish colonies of this continent separated themselves from the mother country, and, in admiration of the United States, adopted republican institutions, that they were to find in us, friends to their freedom, helpers to their civilization. If ever a people were placed by Providence in a condition to do good to a neighboring state, we of this country sustained such a relation to Mexico. That nation, inferior in science, arts, agriculture, and legislation, looked to us with a generous trust. She opened her ports and territories to our farmers, mechanics, and merchants. We might have conquered her by the only honorable arms, by the force of superior intelligence, industry, and morality. We might silently have poured in upon her our improvements; and by the infusion of our population have assimilated her to ourselves. Justice, goodwill, and profitable intercourse might have cemented a lasting friendship. And what is now the case? A deadly hatred burns in Mexico towards this country. No stronger national sentiment now binds her scattered provinces together, than dread and detestation of Republican America. She is ready to attach herself to Europe for defence from the United States. All the moral power, which we might have gained over Mexico, we have thrown away; and suspicion, dread, and abhorrence, have supplanted respect and trust.

I am aware that these remarks are met by a vicious reasoning, which discredits a people among whom it finds favor. It is sometimes said, that nations are swayed by

Jaws, as unfailing as those which govern matter ; that they have their destinies ; that their character and position carry them forward irresistibly to their goal ; that the stationary Turk must sink under the progressive civilization of Russia, as inevitably as the crumbling edifice falls to the earth ; that, by a like necessity, the Indians have melted before the white man, and the mixed, degraded race of Mexico must melt before the Anglo Saxon. Away with this vile sophistry. There is no necessity for crime. There is no fate to justify rapacious nations, any more than to justify gamblers and robbers, in plunder. We boast of the progress of society, and this progress consists in the substitution of reason and moral principle for the sway of brute force. It is true, that more civilized must always exert a great power over less civilized communities in their neighborhood. But it may and should be a power to enlighten and improve, not to crush and destroy. We talk of accomplishing our destiny. So did the late conqueror of Europe ; and destiny consigned him to a lonely rock in the ocean, the prey of an ambition which destroyed no peace but his own.

Hitherto, I have spoken of the annexation of Texas as embroiling us with Mexico ; but it will not stop here. It will bring us into collision with other states. It will, almost of necessity, involve us in hostility with European powers. Such are now the connexions of nations, that Europe must look with jealousy on a country, whose ambition, seconded by vast resources, will seem to place within her grasp the empire of the new world. And not only general considerations of this nature, but the particular relation of certain foreign states to this continent, must tend to destroy the peace now happily subsisting between us and the kingdoms of Europe. England, in particular, must watch us with suspicion, and cannot but resist our appropriation of Texas

to ourselves. She has at once a moral and political interest in this question, which demands, and will justify interference.

First, England has a moral interest in this question. The annexation of Texas is sought by us for the very purpose of extending slavery, and thus will necessarily give new life and extension to the slave trade. A new and vast market for slaves cannot, of course, be opened, without inviting and obtaining a supply from abroad, as well as from this country. The most solemn treaties, and ships of war lining the African coast, do not, and cannot suppress this infernal traffic, as long as the slaver, freighted with stolen, chained, and wretched captives, can obtain a price proportioned to the peril of the undertaking. Now England has long made it a part of her foreign policy, to suppress the slave trade; and, of late, a strong public feeling impels the government to resist, as far as may be, the extension of slavery. Can we expect her to be a passive spectator of a measure, by which her struggles for years in the cause of humanity, and some of her strongest national feelings are to be withheld?

England is a privileged nation. On one part of her history, she can look with unmixed self-respect. With the exception of the promulgation of Christianity, I know not a moral effort so glorious, as the long, painful, victorious struggle of her philanthropists against that concentration of all horrors, cruelties, and crimes, the slave trade. Next to this, her recent emancipation act is the most signal expression, afforded by our times, of the progress of civilization and a purer Christianity. Other nations have won imperishable honors by heroic struggles for their own rights. But there was wanting the example of a nation espousing, with disinterestedness, and amidst great obstacles, the rights of others, the rights of those who had no

claim but that of a common humanity, the rights of the most fallen of the race. Great Britain, loaded with an unprecedented debt and with a grinding taxation, contracted a new debt of a hundred million dollars, to give freedom, not to Englishmen, but to the degraded African. This was not an act of policy, not a work of statesmen. Parliament but registered the edict of the people. The English nation, with one heart and one voice; under a strong Christian impulse, and without distinction of rank, sex, party, or religious names, decreed freedom to the slave. I know not, that history records a national act so disinterested, so sublime. In the progress of ages, England's naval triumphs will shrink into a more and more narrow space in the records of our race. This moral triumph will fill a broader, brighter page. Is not England, representing as she does in this case the civilized world, authorized, and even bound to remonstrate in the name of humanity and religion, against a measure, by which the great work, for which she has so long toiled, is to be indefinitely postponed.

But England has a political as well as moral interest in this question. By the annexation of Texas we shall approach her liberated colonies; we shall build up a power in her neighborhood, to which no limits can be prescribed. By adding Texas to our acquisition of Florida, we shall do much toward girdling the Gulf of Mexico; and I doubt not, that some of our politicians will feel, as if our mastery in that sea were sure. The West Indian Archipelago, in which the European is regarded as an intruder, will, of course, be embraced in our ever-growing scheme of empire. In truth, collision with the West Indies will be the most certain effect of the extension of our power in that quarter. The example, which they exhibit, of African freedom, of the elevation of the colored race to the rights of men,

is of all influences most menacing to slavery at the South. It must grow continually more perilous. These islands, unless interfered with from abroad, seem destined to be nurseries of civilization and freedom to the African race. The white race must melt more and more before the colored, if both are left to free competition. The Europeans, unnerved by the climate, and forming but a handful of the population, cannot stand before the African, who revels in the heat of the tropics, and is to develope under it all his energies. Will a slaveholding people, spreading along the shores of the Mexican Gulf, cultivate friendly sentiments towards communities, whose whole history will be a bitter reproach to their institutions, a witness against their wrongs, and whose ardent sympathies will be enlisted in the cause of the slave? Cruel, ferocious conflicts must grow from this neighborhood of hostile principles, of communities regarding one another with unextinguishable hatred. All the islands of the Archipelago will have cause to dread our power; but none so much as the emancipated. Is it not more than possible, that wars, having for an object the subjugation of the colored race, the destruction of this tempting example of freedom, should spring from the proposed extension of our dominion along the Mexican Gulf? Can England view our encroachments without alarm? I know it is thought, that, staggering, as she does, under her enormous debt, she will be slow to engage in war. But other nations of Europe have islands in the same neighborhood, to induce them to make common cause with her. Other nations look with jealousy on our peculiar institutions and our growing maritime power. Other nations are unwilling, that we should engross or control the whole commerce of the Mexican Gulf. We ought to remember, that this jealousy is sanctioned by our own example. It is understood, that, at one period of the internal disor-

ders of Spain, which rendered all her foreign possessions insecure, we sought from France and Great Britain assurances that they would not possess themselves of Cuba. Still more, after the revolt of her colonies from Spain, and after our recognition of their independence, it was announced to the nations of Europe, in the message of the president, that we should regard as hostile, any interference, on their part, with these new governments, "for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling their destiny in any other way." I, of course, have no communication with foreign cabinets; but I cannot doubt that Great Britain has remonstrated against the annexation of Texas to this country. An English minister would be unworthy of his office, who should see another state greedily swallowing up territories in the neighborhood of British colonies, and not strive, by all just means, to avert the danger. I have just referred to the warning given by us to the powers of Europe, to abstain from appropriating to themselves the colonies torn from Spain. How will Europe interpret our act, if we now seize Texas and take this stride towards Mexico? Will she not suspect, that we purposed to drive away the older vultures, in order to keep the victim to ourselves; that, conscious of growing power, we foresaw, in the exclusion of foreign states, the sure extension of our own dominion over the new world? Can we expect those powers, with such an example before them, to heed our warning? Will they look patiently on, and see the young vulture feasting on the nearest prey, and fleshing itself for the spoils which their own near possessions will soon present? Will it be strange, if hunger for a share of the plunder, as well as the principle of self defence, should make this continent the object of their policy to an extent we have never dreamed?

It is of great and manifest importance, that we should use every just means to separate this continent from the politics of Europe, that we should prevent, as far as possible, all connexion, except commercial, between the old and the new world, that we should give to foreign states no occasion or pretext for insinuating themselves into our affairs. For this end, we should maintain towards our sister republics a more liberal policy than was ever adopted by nation towards nation. We should strive to appease their internal divisions, and to reconcile them to each other. We should even make sacrifices to build up their strength. Weak and divided, they cannot but lean on foreign support. No pains should be spared to prevent or allay the jealousies, which the great superiority of this country is suited to awaken. By an opposite policy we shall favor foreign interference. By encroaching on Mexico, we shall throw her into the arms of European States, shall compel her to seek defence in transatlantic alliance. How plain is it, that alliance with Mexico will be hostility to the United States, that her defenders will repay themselves by making her subservient to their views, that they will thus strike root in her soil, monopolize her trade and control her resources. And with what face can we resist the aggressions of others on our neighbor, if we give an example of aggression? Still more, if by our advances we put the colonies of England in new peril, with what face can we oppose her occupation of Cuba? Suppose her, with that magnificent Island in her hands, to command the Mexican Gulf and the mouths of the Mississippi. Will the Western States find compensation for this formidable neighborhood, in the privilege of flooding Texas with slaves?

Thus, wars with Europe and Mexico are to be entailed on us by the annexation of Texas. And is war the policy by which this country is to flourish? Was it for interminable conflicts that we formed our Union? Is it blood,

shed for plunder, which is to consolidate our institutions? Is it by collision with the greatest maritime power, that our commerce is to gain strength? Is it by arming against ourselves the moral sentiments of the world, that we are to build up national honor? Must we of the North buckle on our armor, to fight the battles of slavery; to fight for a possession, which our moral principles and just jealousy forbid us to incorporate with our confederacy? In attaching Texas to ourselves, we provoke hostilities, and at the same time expose new points of attack to our foes. Vulnerable at so many points, we shall need a vast military force. Great armies will require great revenues, and raise up great chieftains. Are we tired of freedom, that we are prepared to place it under such guardians? Is the republic bent on dying by its own hands? Does not every man feel, that, with war for our habit, our institutions cannot be preserved? If ever a country were bound to peace, it is this. Peace is our great interest. In peace our resources are to be developed, the true interpretation of the constitution to be established, and the interfering claims of liberty and order to be adjusted. In peace we are to discharge our great debt to the human race, and to diffuse freedom by manifesting its fruits. A country has no right to adopt a policy, however gainful, which, as it may foresee, will determine it to a career of war. A nation, like an individual, is bound to seek even by sacrifices a position, which will favor peace, justice, and the exercise of a beneficent influence on the world. A nation, provoking war by cupidity, by encroachment, and above all by efforts to propagate the curse of slavery, is alike false to itself, to God, and to the human race.

III. I proceed now to a consideration of what is to me the strongest argument against annexing Texas to the United States. This measure will extend and perpetuate

34

slavery. I have necessarily glanced at this topic in the preceding pages; but it deserves to be brought out distinctly. I shall speak calmly, but I must speak earnestly; and I feel and rejoice to feel, that, however you may differ from some of my views, yet we do not differ as to the great principle on which all my remarks and remonstrances are founded. Slavery seems to you as to me an evil and a wrong. Your language on this subject has given me a satisfaction, for which I owe you thanks; and if in what I am now to say, I may use expressions which you may think too strong, I am sure your candor will recognise in them the signs of deep conviction, and will acquit me of all desire to irritate or give pain.

The annexation of Texas, I have said, will extend and perpetuate slavery. It is fitted and still more intended to do so. On this point there can be no doubt. As far back as the year 1829, the annexation of Texas was agitated in the Southern and Western States; and it was urged on the ground of the strength and extension it would give to the slaveholding interest. In a series of essays ascribed to a gentleman, now a senator in Congress, it was maintained, that five or six slaveholding states would by this measure be added to the Union; and he even intimated that as many as nine states as large as Kentucky might be formed within the limits of Texas. In Virginia, about the same time, calculations were made as to the increased value which would thus be given to slaves, and it was even said, that this acquisition would raise the price fifty per cent. Of late the language on this subject is most explicit. The great argument for annexing Texas is, that it will strengthen "the peculiar institutions" of the South, and open a new and vast field for slavery.

By this act, slavery will be spread over regions to which it is now impossible to set limits. Texas, I repeat it, is

but the first step of aggressions. I trust, indeed, that Providence will beat back and humble our cupidity and ambition. But one guilty success is often suffered to be crowned, as men call it, with greater; in order that a more awful retribution may at length vindicate the justice of God, and the rights of the oppressed. Texas, smitten with slavery, will spread the infection beyond herself. We know that the tropical regions have been found most propitious to this pestilence; nor can we promise ourselves, that its expulsion from them for a season forbids its return. By annexing Texas, we may send this scourge to a distance, which, if now revealed, would appal us, and through these vast regions every cry of the injured will invoke wrath on our heads.

By this act, slavery will be perpetuated in the old states as well as spread over new. It is well known, that the soil of some of the old states has become exhausted by slave cultivation. Their neighborhood to communities, which are flourishing under free labor, forces on them perpetual arguments for adopting this better system. They now adhere to slavery, not on account of the wealth which it extracts from the soil, but because it furnishes men and women to be sold in newly settled and more southern districts. It is by slave breeding and slave selling that these states subsist. Take away from them a foreign market, and slavery would die. Of consequence, by opening a new market, it is prolonged and invigorated. By annexing Texas, we shall not only create it where it does not exist, but breathe new life into it, where its end seemed to be near. States, which might and ought to throw it off, will make the multiplication of slaves their great aim and chief resource.

Nor is the worst told. As I have before intimated, and it cannot be too often repeated, we shall not only quicken

the domestic slave trade ; we shall give a new impulse to the foreign. This indeed we have pronounced in our laws to be felony ; but we make our laws cobwebs, when we offer to rapacious men strong motives for their violation. Open a market for slaves in an unsettled country, with a sweep of sea-coast, and at such a distance from the seat of government that laws may be evaded with impunity, and how can you exclude slaves from Africa ? It is well known that cargoes have been landed in Louisiana. What is to drive them from Texas ? In incorporating this region with the Union to make it a slave country, we send the kidnapper to prowl through the jungles, and to dart, like a beast of prey, on the defenceless villages of Africa. We chain the helpless despairing victims ; crowd them into the fetid, pestilential slave ship ; expose them to the unutterable cruelties of the middle passage, and, if they survive it, crush them with perpetual bondage.

I now ask, whether as a people, we are prepared to seize on a neighboring territory for the end of extending slavery ? I ask, whether, as a people, we can stand forth in the sight of God, in the sight of the nations, and adopt this atrocious policy ? Sooner perish ! Sooner be our name blotted out from the record of nations !

This is no place for entering into the argument against slavery. I have elsewhere given my views of it. In truth, no argument is needed. The evil of slavery speaks for itself. It is one of those primary, intuitive truths, which need only a fair exhibition to be immediately received. To state, is to condemn this institution. The choice which every freeman makes of death for his child and for every thing he loves, in preference to slavery, shows what it is. The single consideration, that, by slavery, one human being is placed powerless and defenceless in the hands of another, to be driven to whatever labor that other may impose, to

suffer whatever punishment he may inflict, to live as his tool, the instrument of his pleasure, this is all that is needed, to satisfy such as know the human heart and its unfitness for irresponsible power, that, of all conditions, slavery is the most hostile to the dignity, self-respect, improvement, rights, and happiness of human beings. Is it within the bounds of credibility, that a people, boasting of freedom, of civilization, of Christianity, should systematically strive to spread this calamity over the earth?

To perpetuate and extend slavery is not now, in a moral point of view, what it once was. We cannot shelter ourselves under the errors and usages of our times. We do not belong to the dark ages, or to heathenism. We have not grown up under the prejudices of a blinding, crushing tyranny. We live under free institutions and under the broad light of Christianity. Every principle of our government and religion condemns slavery. The spirit of our age condemns it. The decree of the civilized world has gone out against it. England has abolished it. France and Denmark meditate its abolition. The chain is falling from the serf in Russia. In the whole circuit of civilized nations, with the single exception of the United States, not a voice is lifted up in defence of slavery. All the great names in legislation and religion are against it. The most enduring reputations of our times have been won by resisting it. Recal the great men of this and the last generation, and be they philosophers, philanthropists, poets, economists, statesmen, jurists, all swell the reprobation of slavery. The leaders of opposing religious sects, Wesley, the patriarch of Methodism, Edwards and Hopkins, pillars of Calvinism, join as brothers in one solemn testimony against slavery. And is this an age in which a free and Christian people shall deliberately resolve to extend and perpetuate the evil? In so doing, we cut ourselves off

from the communion of the nations. We sit below the civilization of our age. We invite the scorn, indignation, and abhorrence of the world.

Let it not be said, that this opposition of our times to slavery is an accident, a temporary gust of opinion, an eddy in the current of human thought, a fashion to pass away with the present actors on the stage. He, who so says, must have read history with a superficial eye, and is strangely blind to the deepest and most powerful influences which are moulding society. Christianity has done more than all things to determine the character and direction of our present civilization; and who can question or overlook the tendency and design of this religion? Christianity has no plainer purpose, than to unite all men as brethren, to make man unutterably dear to man, to pour contempt on outward distinctions, to raise the fallen, to league all in efforts for the elevation of all. Under its influence, the differences of nations and rank are softening. To the establishment of a fraternal relation among men, the science, literature, commerce, education of the Christian world are tending. Who cannot see this mighty movement of Providence? Who is so blind as to call it a temporary impulse? Who so daring, so impious, as to strive to arrest it?

What is the tendency of all governments in the Christian world? To secure more and more to every man his rights, be his condition what it may. Even in despotisms, where political rights are denied, private rights are held more and more sacred. The absolute monarch is more and more anxious to improve the laws of the state, and to extend their protection and restraints over all classes and individuals without distinction. Equality before the law, is the maxim of the civilized world. To place the rights of a large part of the community beyond the protection of law,

to place half a people under private, irresponsible power, is to oppose one of the most characteristic and glorious tendencies of modern times. Who has the courage to set down this reverence for private rights among the fashions and caprices of the day? Is it not founded in everlasting truth? and dare we, in the face of it, extend and perpetuate an institution, the grand feature of which is, that it tramples private rights in the dust?

Whoever studies modern history with any care, must discern in it a steady growing movement towards one most interesting result, I mean, towards the elevation of the laboring class of society. This is not a recent, accidental turn of human affairs. We can trace its beginning in the feudal times, and its slow advances in subsequent periods, until it has become the master movement of our age. Is it not plain, that those who toil with their hands, and whose productive industry is the spring of all wealth, are rising from the condition of beasts of burden, to which they were once reduced; to the consciousness, intelligence, self-respect, and proper happiness of men? Is it not the strong tendency of our times to diffuse among the many the improvements once confined to the few? He who over-looks this has no comprehension of the great work of Providence, or of the most signal feature of his times; and is this an age for efforts to extend and perpetuate an institution, the very object of which is to keep down the laborer, and to make him a machine for another's gratification?

I know it has been said in reply to such views, that, do what we will with the laborer, call him what we will, he is and must be in reality, a slave. The doctrine has been published at the South, that nature has made two classes, the rich and the poor, the employer and the employed, the capitalist and the operative, and that the class who work, are to all intents, slaves to those in whose service

they are engaged. In a report on the mail, recently offered to the Senate of the United States, an effort was made to establish resemblances between slavery and the condition of free laborers, for the obvious purpose of showing, that the shades of difference between them are not very strong. Is it possible that such reasonings escaped from a man, who has trod the soil of New England, and was educated at one of her colleges? Whom did he meet at that college? The sons of her laborers, young men, whose hands had been hardened at the plough. Does he not know, that the families of laborers have furnished every department in life among us with illustrious men, have furnished our heroes in war, our statesmen in council, our orators in the pulpit and at the bar, our merchants whose enterprises embrace the whole earth? What! the laborer of the free state a slave, and to be ranked with the despised negro, whom the lash drives to toil, and whose dearest rights are at the mercy of irresponsible power! If there be a firm independent spirit on earth, it is to be found in the man, who tills the fields of the free states, and moistens them with the sweat of his brow. I recently heard of a visitor from the South, compassionating the operatives of our manufactories, as in a worse condition than the slave. What carries the young woman to the manufactory? Not generally the want of a comfortable home; but sometimes the desire of supplying herself with a wardrobe, which ought to satisfy the affluent, and oftener the desire of furnishing in more than decent style the home, where she is to sustain the nearest relations, and perform the most sacred duties of life. Generally speaking, each of these young women has her plan of life, her hopes, her bright dreams, her spring of action in her own free-will, and amidst toil she contrives to find seasons for intellectual and religious culture. It is common in New England for the sons of

farmers to repair to the large towns, and there to establish themselves as domestics in families, a condition which the South will be peculiarly disposed to identify with slavery. But what brings these young men to the city? The hope of earning in a shorter time a sum, with which to purchase a farm at home or in the West, perhaps to become traders; and in these vocations they not unfrequently rise to consideration, and to what, in their places of residence, is called wealth. I have in my thoughts an individual distinguished alike by vigor and elevation of mind, who began life by hiring himself as a laborer to a farmer, and then entered a family as a domestic; and now he is the honored associate of the most enlightened men, and devotes himself to the highest subjects of human thought. It is true, that much remains to be done for the laboring class in the most favored regions; but the intelligence already spread through this class, is an earnest of a brighter day, of the most glorious revolution in history, of the elevation of the mass of men to the dignity of human beings.

It is the great mission of this country, to forward this revolution, and never was a sublimer work committed to a nation. Our mission is to elevate society through all its conditions, to secure to every human being the means of progress, to substitute the government of equal laws for that of irresponsible individuals, to prove that, under popular institutions, the people may be carried forward, that the multitude who toil are capable of enjoying the noblest blessings of the social state. The prejudice, that labor is a degradation, one of the worst prejudices handed down from barbarous ages, is to receive here, a practical refutation. The power of liberty to raise up the whole people, this is the great Idea, on which our institutions rest, and which is to be wrought out in our history. Shall a nation having such a mission abjure it, and even fight against the progress which it is specially called to promote?

The annexation of Texas, if it should be accomplished, would do much to determine the future history and character of this country. It is one of those measures, which call a nation to pause, reflect, look forward, because their force is not soon exhausted. Many acts of government, intensely exciting at the moment, are yet of little importance, because their influence is too transient to leave a trace on history. A bad administration may impoverish a people at home, or cripple its energies abroad, for a year or more. But such wounds heal soon. A young people soon recruits its powers, and starts forward with increased impulse, after the momentary suspension of its activity. The chief interest of a people lies in measures, which, making, perhaps, little noise, go far to fix its character, to determine its policy and fate for ages, to decide its rank among nations. A fearful responsibility rests on those who originate or control these pregnant acts. The destiny of millions is in their hands. The execration of millions may fall on their heads. Long after present excitements shall have passed away, long after they and their generation shall have vanished from the earth, the fruits of their agency will be reaped. Such a measure is that of which I now write. It will commit us to a degrading policy, the issues of which lie beyond human foresight. In opening to ourselves vast regions, through which we may spread slavery, and in spreading it for this, among other ends, that the slaveholding states may bear rule in the national councils, we make slavery the predominant interest of the state. We make it the basis of power, the spring or guide of public measures, the object for which the revenues, strength, and wealth of the country, are to be exhausted. Slavery will be branded on our front, as the great Idea, the prominent feature of the country. We shall renounce our high calling as a people, and accomplish the lowest destiny to which a nation can be bound.

And are we prepared for this degradation? Are we prepared to couple with the name of our country the infamy of deliberately spreading slavery? and especially of spreading it through regions from which the wise and humane legislation of a neighboring republic had excluded it? We call Mexico a semi-barbarous people; and yet we talk of planting slavery where Mexico would not suffer it to live. What American will not blush to lift his head in Europe, if this disgrace shall be fastened on his country? Let other calamities, if God so will, come on us. Let us be steeped in poverty. Let pestilence stalk through our land. Let famine thin our population. Let the world join hands against our free institutions, and deluge our shores with blood. All this can be endured. A few years of industry and peace will recruit our wasted numbers, and spread fruitfulness over our desolated fields. But a nation devoting itself to the work of spreading and perpetuating slavery, stamps itself with a guilt and shame, which generations may not be able to efface. The plea on which we have rested, that slavery was not our choice, but a sad necessity bequeathed us by our fathers, will avail us no longer. The whole guilt will be assumed by ourselves.

It is very lamentable, that among the distinguished men of the South, any should be found so wanting to their own fame, as to become advocates of slavery. That vulgar politicians, who look only at the interests of the day and the chances of the next election, should swell the madness of the passions, by which they hope to rise, is a thing of course. But that men, who might leave honorable and enduring record of themselves in their country's history, who might associate their names with their country's progress, and who are solemnly bound by their high gifts to direct and purify public sentiment, that such men should lend their great powers to the extension of slavery, is among the dark symp-

toms of the times. Can such men be satisfied with the sympathies and shouts of the little circle around them, and of the passing moment? Have they nothing of that prophetic instinct, by which truly great men read the future? Can they learn nothing from the sentence now passed on men, who, fifty years ago, defended the slave trade? We have to rejoice, Sir, that you, amidst the excitements of the time, have always given your testimony against slavery. You have adhered to the doctrine, which the great men of the South of the last generation asserted, that it is a great evil. We shall not forget this among the good services, which you have rendered to your country.

I have expressed my fears, that by the annexation of Texas, slavery is to be continued and extended. But I wish not to be understood, as having the slightest doubt as to the approaching fall of the institution. It may be prolonged to our reproach and greater ultimate suffering. But fall it will and must. This, Sir, you know, and I doubt not, rejoice to know. The advocates of slavery must not imagine, that to carry a vote is to sustain their cause. With all their power, they cannot withstand the providence of God, the principles of human nature, the destinies of the race. To succeed, they must roll back time to the dark ages, must send back Luther to the cell of his monastery, must extinguish the growing light of Christianity and moral science, must blot out the declaration of American Independence. The fall of slavery is as sure as the descent of your own Ohio. Moral laws are as irresistible as physical. In the most enlightened countries of Europe, a man would forfeit his place in society, by vindicating slavery. The slaveholder must not imagine, that he has nothing to do but fight with a few societies. These, of themselves, are nothing. He should not waste on them one fear. They are strong, only as representing the spirit of

the Christian and civilized world. His battle is with the laws of human nature and the irresistible tendencies of human affairs. These are not to be withstood by artful strokes of policy, or by daring crimes. The world is against him, and the world's Maker. Every day the sympathies of the world are forsaking him. Can he hope to sustain slavery against the moral feeling, the solemn sentence of the human race?

The South, cut off by its "peculiar institutions" from close connexion with other communities, comprehends little the progress of the civilized world. The spirit, which is spreading through other communities, finds no organ within its borders, and the strength of this is therefore little understood. Hence, it looks on anti-slavery movements in any part of the country, as an accident, which a little force can put down. It might as well think of imprisoning the winds. The South is ignorant of what it most needs to know. A very intelligent gentleman from that quarter, told me not long ago, that he could not learn at home the working of Emancipation in the West Indies, so that an experiment of infinite interest to the slaveholder is going on at his door, and he knows little more of it than if it were occurring in another planet. Of course, there are exceptions. There are at the South philosophical observers of the progress of human affairs. But in such a state of society, it is hard to realize the truth on this subject. Were it known, the project of building a power on the diffusion of slavery, would seem to be an act of madness, as truly as of crime.

I suppose, that I shall be charged with unfriendly feelings towards the South. All such I disclaim. Strange as it may seem, if I have partialities, they are rather for the South. I spent a part of my early life in that region, when manners probably retained more of their primitive character, than they now do; and to a young man, unaccustomed to life and

its perils, there was something singularly captivating in the unbounded hospitality, the impulsive generosity, the carelessness of the future, the frank, open manners, the buoyant spirit and courage, which marked the people; and though I have since learned to interpret more wisely what I then saw, still the impressions which I then received, and the friendships formed at a yet earlier age with the youth of the South, have always given me a leaning towards that part of the country. I am unconscious of local prejudices. My interest in the South strengthens my desire to avert the annexation of Texas to the Union. That act, I feel, will fix an indelible stain on the South. It will conflict with the generous elements of character, which I take pleasure in recollecting there. The South will cease to be what it was. In the period to which I have referred, slavery was acknowledged there, to be a great evil. I heard it spoken of freely, with abhorrence. The moral sentiment of the community on this point was not corrupt. The principles of Mr. Jefferson in relation to it found a wide response. The doctrine, that slavery is a good, if spread by the seizure of Texas, will work a moral revolution, the most disastrous which can befall the South. It will paralyze every effort for escape from this enormous evil. A deadly sophistry will weigh on men's consciences and hearts, until terrible convulsions, —God's just judgments,— will hasten the deliverance which human justice and benevolence were bound to accomplish.

IV. I now proceed to another important argument against the annexation of Texas to our country, the argument drawn from the bearings of the measure on our National Union. Next to liberty, union is our great political interest, and this cannot but be loosened, it may be dissolved, by the proposed extention of our territory. I will not say

that every extension must be pernicious, that our government cannot hold together even our present confederacy, that the central heart cannot send its influences to the remote states which are to spring up within our present borders. Old theories must be cautiously applied to the institutions of this country. If the Federal government will abstain from minute legislation, and rigidly confine itself within constitutional bounds, it may be a bond of union to more extensive communities than were ever comprehended under one sway. Undoubtedly there is peril in extending ourselves, and yet the chief benefit of the Union, which is the preservation of peaceful relations among neighboring states, is so vast, that some risk should be taken to secure it in the greatest possible degree. The objection to the annexation of Texas, drawn from the unwieldiness it would give to the country, though very serious, is not decisive. A far more serious objection is, that it is to be annexed to us for the avowed purpose of multiplying slaveholding states, and thus giving political power. This cannot, ought not to be borne. It will justify, it will at length demand the separation of the states.

We maintain that this policy is altogether without reason on the part of the South. The South has exerted, and cannot help exerting a disproportionate share of influence on the confederacy. The slaveholding states have already advantages for coöperation and for swaying the country, which the others do not possess. The free states have no great common interest, like slavery, to hold them together. They differ in character, feelings, and pursuits. They agree but on one point and that a negative one, the absence of slavery, and this distinction, as is well known, makes no lively impression on the consciousness, and in no degree counteracts the influences which divide them from one another. To this may be added the well known fact, that in the free

states, the subject of politics is of secondary importance, whilst at the South it is paramount. At the North every man must toil for subsistence, and amidst the feverish competitions and anxieties of the eager and universal competition for gain, political power is sought with little comparative avidity. In some districts, it is hard to find fit representatives for Congress, so backward are superior men to forego the emoluments of their vocation, the prospects of independence, for the uncertainties of public life. At the North, too, a vast amount of energy is absorbed in associations of a religious, philanthropic, literary character. The apathy of the free states in regard to Texas, an apathy from which they are just beginning to be roused, is a striking proof of their almost incredible indifference to political power. Perhaps no parallel to it can be found in the history of confederations. What a contrast does the South form with the divided and slumbering North! There, one strong, broad distinction exists, of which all the members of the community have a perpetual consciousness; there, a peculiar element is found, which spreads its influence through the mass, and impresses itself on the whole constitution of society. Slavery is not a superficial distinction. Nothing decides the character of a people more than the form and determination of labor. Hence we find a unity at the South unknown at the North. At the South, too, the proprietors, released from the necessity of labor, and having little of the machinery of associations to engage their attention, devote themselves to politics with a concentration of zeal, which a Northern man can only comprehend by residing on the spot. Hence the South has professional politicians, a character hardly known in the free states. The result is plain. The South has generally ruled the country. It must always have an undue power. United, as the North cannot be, it can always link with itself some discontented portion at the North, which it

can liberally reward by the patronage which the possession of the government confers. That the constitutional rights of the South should be prejudiced by the North, is one of those moral impossibilities, against which it is folly to ask security.

We cannot consent, that the South should extend its already disproportionate power by an indefinite extension of territory, because we maintain, that its dispositions towards us give us no pledge, that its power will be well used. It is unhappily too well known, that it wants friendly feelings towards the North. Divided from us by an institution, which gives it a peculiar character, which lays it open to reproach, and which will never suffer it to rival our prosperity, it cannot look on us with favor. It magnifies our faults. It is blind to our virtues. At the North, no unfriendly disposition prevails towards the South. We are too busy and too prosperous for hatred. We complain, that our good will is not reciprocated. We complain, that our commerce and manufactures have sometimes found little mercy at the hands of the South. Still more we feel, though we are slow to complain of it, that in Congress, the common ground of the confederacy, we have had to encounter a tone and bearing, which it has required the colder temperament of the North to endure. We cannot consent to take a lower place than we now hold. We cannot consent, that our confederacy should spread over the wilds of Mexico to give us more powerful masters. The old balance of the country is unfavorable enough. We cannot consent, that a new weight should be thrown in, which may fix the political inferiority of ourselves and our posterity. I give you, Sir, the feelings of the North. In part they may be prejudices. Jealousies, often groundless, are the necessary fruits of confederations. On that account, measures must not be adopted, disturbing violently, unnaturally, unexpectedly, the old distributions of power, and directly aimed at that result.

7. 48

In other ways the annexation of Texas is to endanger the Union. It will give new violence and passion to the agitation of the question of slavery. It is well known, that a majority at the North have discouraged the discussion of this topic, on the ground, that slavery was imposed on the South by necessity, that its continuance was not of choice, and that the states, in which it subsists, if left to themselves, would find a remedy in their own way. Let slavery be systematically proposed as the policy of these states, let it bind them together in efforts to establish political power, and a new feeling will burst forth through the whole North. It will be a concentration of moral, religious, political, and patriotic feelings. The fire, now smothered, will blaze out, and of consequence, new jealousies and exasperations will be kindled at the South. Strange that the South should think of securing its "peculiar institutions" by violent means. Its violence necessarily increases the evils it would suppress. For example, by denying the right of petition to those who sought the abolition of slavery within the immediate jurisdiction of the United States, it has awakened a spirit, which will overwhelm Congress with petitions, till this right be restored. The annexation of Texas would be a measure of the same injurious character, and would stir up an open uncompromising hostility to slavery, of which we have seen no example, and which would produce a reaction very dangerous to union.

The annexation of Texas will give rise to constitutional questions and conflicts, which cannot be adjusted. It is well known, that the additions to our territory of Louisiana and Florida were acceded to by the North, though very reluctantly, on account of their obvious utility. But it has been seriously doubted, whether the powers given by the constitution were not in both cases transcended. "At the time Louisiana was acquired, Mr. Jefferson himself was

deliberately of opinion, that the treaty-making authority under the constitution of the United States, was incompetent to make such an acquisition from a foreign power, and annex it to the Union, and that an amendment of the constitution would be necessary to sanction it. In a letter to Governor Lincoln he even furnishes the formula of a proposed amendment, for the purpose of admitting Louisiana into the Union; but adds, that the less that is said about the constitutional difficulty, the better. Very little *was* said about it, and there was a general and tacit acquiescence, in consequence of the great and incalculable advantages expected from the acquisition in a national point of view. The purchase of Texas under existing circumstances, might present a very different question."*

It is true, that, as a general rule, the right to purchase territory is incident to sovereignty. But the sovereignty of our national government is a limited one. The constitution was a compromise among independent states, and it is well known that geographical relations and local interests were among the essential conditions on which the compromise was made. We are willing, for the sake of universally acknowledged public interests, that additions of territory should be made to our country. But can it be admitted, that the constitution gives power to the President and Senate to add a vast realm to the United States, for the very purpose of disturbing the balance between different sections, or of securing ascendancy to certain parts of the confederacy? Was not the constitution founded on conditions or considerations, which are even more authoritative than its particular provisions, and the violation of which, must be death to our Union? Besides, a new question is to be opened by the admission of Texas. We shall not pur-

* North American Review, July, 1836.

chase a territory as in the case of Louisiana, but shall admit an independent community, invested with sovereignty, into the confederation; and can the treaty-making power do this? Can it receive foreign nations, however vast, to the Union? Does not the question carry its own answer? By the assumption of such a right, would not the old compact be at once considered as dissolved?

To me it seems not only the right, but the duty of the free states, in case of the annexation of Texas, to say to the slaveholding states, "We regard this act as the dissolution of the Union. The essential conditions of the national compact are violated. To you we will faithfully adhere, but will not join ourselves to this new and iniquitous acquisition. We will not become partners in your wars with Mexico and Europe, in your schemes of spreading and perpetuating slavery, in your hopes of conquest, in your unrighteous spoils." No one prizes the Union more than myself, as the means of peace. But with Texas, we shall have no peace. Texas, brought into the confederacy, will bring with it domestic and foreign strife. It will change our relations to other countries, and to one another. A pacific division in the first instance seems to me to threaten less contention, than a lingering, feverish dissolution of the Union, such as must be expected under this fatal innovation.

I am but one of a nation of fifteen millions, and as such, may seem too insignificant to protest against a public measure. But in this country, every man, even the obscurest, participates in the sovereignty, and is responsible for public acts, unless by some mode of opposition, proportioned to his sense of the evil, he absolves himself from the guilt. For one then, I say, that earnestly as I deprecate the separation of these states, and though this event would disappoint most cherished hopes for my country, still I can submit to it more

readily, than to the reception of Texas into the confederacy. I shrink from that contamination. I shrink from an act, which is to pledge us as a people to robbery and war, to the work of upholding and extending slavery, without limitation or end. I do not desire to share the responsibility, or to live under the laws of a government, adopting such a policy, and swayed by such a spirit, as would be expressed by the incorporation of Texas with our country.

In truth, if the South is bent on incorporating Texas with itself, as a new prop to slavery, it would do well to insist on the division of the states. It would, in so doing, consult best its own safety. It should studiously keep itself from communion with the free part of the country. It should suffer no rail-road from that section to cross its borders. It should block up intercourse with us, by sea and land. Still more, it should abjure connexion with the whole civilized world; for from every country it would be invaded by an influence hostile to slavery. It should borrow the code of the Dictator of Paraguay, and seal itself hermetically against the infectious books, opinions, and visits of foreigners. Its pride, as well as safety should teach it this insulation; for having once taken the ground, that slavery is a good, to be spread and made perpetual, it does by that act forfeit the rank which it covets among civilized and improving communities. It cannot be recognised as an equal by other states. On this point the decree of the world has gone forth, and no protests or clamors can drown the deep solemn voice of humanity, gathering strength with every new generation. A community, acknowledging the evils of slavery, and continuing it only because the first law of nature, self-preservation, seems to require gradual processes of change, may retain the respect of those who deem their fears unfounded. But a community, wedding itself to slavery inseparably, with choice and affection, and with the pur-

pose of spreading the plague far and wide, must become a byword among the nations; and the friend of humanity will shake off the dust of his feet against it, in testimony of his reprobation.

V. I proceed now to the last head of this communication. I observe that the cause of Liberty, of free institutions, a cause more sacred than Union, forbids the annexation of Texas. It is plain from the whole preceding discussion, that this measure will exert a disastrous influence on the moral sentiments and principles of this country, by sanctioning plunder, by inflaming cupidity, by encouraging lawless speculation, by bringing into the confederacy a community whose whole history and circumstances are adverse to moral order and wholesome restraint, by violating national faith, by proposing immoral and inhuman ends, by placing us as a people in opposition to the efforts of philanthropy, and the advancing movements of the civilized world. It will spread a moral corruption, already too rife among us, and in so doing, it will shake the foundations of freedom at home, and bring reproach on it abroad. It will be treachery to the great cause which has been confided to this above all nations.

The dependence of freedom on morals is an old subject, and I have no thought of enlarging on the general truth. I wish only to say, that it is one which needs to be brought home to us at the present moment, and that it cannot be trifled with but to our great peril. There are symptoms of corruption amongst us, which show us that we cannot enter on a new career of crime without peculiar hazard. I cannot do justice to this topic without speaking freely of our country, as freely as I should of any other; and unhappily, we are so accustomed, as a people, to receive incense, to be soothed by flattery, and to account reputation as a

more important interest than morality, that my freedom may be construed into a kind of disloyalty. But it would be wrong to make concessions to this dangerous weakness. I believe that morality is the first interest of a people, and that this requires self-knowledge in nations, as truly as in individuals. He who helps a community to comprehend itself, and to apply to itself a higher rule of action, is the truest patriot, and contributes most to its enduring fame.

I have said, that we shall expose our freedom to great peril by entering a new career of crime. We are corrupt enough already. In one respect, our institutions have disappointed us all. They have not wrought out for us that elevation of character, which is the most precious, and in truth, the only substantial blessing of liberty. Our progress in prosperity has indeed been the wonder of the world; but this prosperity has done much to counteract the ennobling influence of free institutions. The peculiar circumstances of the country and of our times, have poured in upon us a torrent of wealth; and human nature has not been strong enough for the assault of such severe temptation. Prosperity has become dearer than freedom. Government is regarded more as a means of enriching the country, than of securing private rights. We have become wedded to gain, as our chief good. That under the predominance of this degrading passion, the higher virtues, the moral independence, the simplicity of manners, the stern uprightness, the self-reverence, the respect for man as man, which are the ornaments and safe-guards of a republic, should wither, and give place to selfish calculation and indulgence, to show and extravagance, to anxious, envious, discontented strivings, to wild adventure, and to the gambling spirit of speculation, will surprise no one who has studied human nature. The invasion of Texas by our citizens, is a mournful comment on our national morality. Whether without some very trial, some

signal prostration of our prosperity, we can rise to the force and self-denial of freemen, is a question not easily solved.

There are other alarming views. A spirit of lawlessness pervades the community, which, if not repressed, threatens the dissolution of our present forms of society. Even in the old states, mobs are taking the government into their hands, and a profligate newspaper finds little difficulty in stirring up multitudes to violence. When we look at the parts of the country nearest Texas, we see the arm of the law paralyzed by the passions of the individual. Men take under their own protection the rights which it is the very office of government to secure. The citizen, wearing arms as means of defence, carries with him perpetual proofs of the weakness of the authorities under which he lives. The substitution of self-constituted tribunals for the regular course of justice, and the infliction of immediate punishment in the moment of popular frenzy, are symptoms of a people half reclaimed from barbarism. I know not, that any civilized country on earth has exhibited, during the last year, a spectacle so atrocious, as the burning of a colored man by a slow fire, in the neighborhood of St. Louis; and this infernal sacrifice was offered not by a few fiends selected from the whole country, but by a crowd gathered from a single spot. Add to all this, the invasions of the rights of speech and of the press by lawless force, the extent and toleration of which oblige us to believe, that a considerable portion of our citizens have no comprehension of the first principles of liberty.

It is an undeniable fact, that, in consequence of these and other symptoms, the confidence of many reflecting men in our free institutions, is very much impaired. Some despair. That main pillar of public liberty, mutual trust among citizens, is shaken. That we must seek security for property and life in a stronger government, is a spread-

ing conviction. Men, who in public talk of the stability of our institutions, whisper their doubts (perhaps their scorn) in private. So common are these apprehensions, that the knowledge of them has reached Europe. Not long ago, I received a letter from an enlightened and fervent friend of liberty, in Great Britain, beseeching me to inform him, how far he was to rely on the representations of one of his countrymen just returned from the United States, who had reported to him, that, in the most respectable society, he had again and again been told, that the experiment of freedom here was a failure, and that faith in our institutions was gone. That the traveller misinterpreted in a measure what he heard, we shall all acknowledge. But is the old enthusiasm of liberty unchilled among us? Is the old jealousy of power as keen and uncompromising? Do not parties more unscrupulously encroach on the constitution and on the rights of minorities? In one respect we must all admit a change. When you and I grew up, what a deep interest pervaded this country in the success of free institutions abroad! With what throbbing hearts did we follow the struggles of the oppressed! How many among us were ready to lay down their lives for the cause of liberty on the earth! And now who cares for free institutions abroad? How seldom does the topic pass men's lips! Multitudes, discouraged by the licentiousness at home, doubt the value of popular institutions, especially in less enlightened countries; whilst greater numbers, locked up in gain, can spare no thought on the struggles of liberty, and, provided they can drive a prosperous trade with foreign nations, care little whether they are bond or free.

I may be thought inclined to draw a dark picture of our moral condition. But at home I am set down among those who hope against hope; and I have never ceased to condemn as a crime the despondence of those, who, lamenting

the corruptions of the times, do not lift a finger to withstand it. I am far, very far from despair. I have no fears but such as belong to a friend of freedom. Among dark omens I see favorable influences, remedial processes, counteracting agencies. I well know that the vicious part of our system makes more noise and show than the sound. I know that the prophets of ruin to our institutions are to be found most frequently in the party out of power, and that many dark auguries must be set down to the account of disappointment and irritation. I am sure too, that imminent peril would wake up the spirit of our fathers, in many who slumber in these days of ease and security. It is also true that, with all our defects, there is a wider diffusion of intelligence, moral restraint, and self-respect among us, than through any other community. Still I am compelled to acknowledge an extent of corruption among us, which menaces freedom and our dearest interests: and a policy, which will give new and enduring impulse to corruption, which will multiply indefinitely public and private crime, ought to be reprobated as the sorest calamity we can incur. Freedom is fighting her battles in the world with sufficient odds against her. Let us not give new chances to her foes.

That the cause of republicanism is suffering abroad through the defects and crimes of our countrymen, is as true, as that it is regarded with increased skepticism among ourselves. Abroad, republicanism is identified with the United States, and it is certain that the American name has not risen of late in the world. It so happens, that, whilst writing, I have received a newspaper from England, in which Lynch law is as familiarly associated with our country, as if it were one of our establishments. We are quoted as monuments of the degrading tendencies of popular institutions. When I visited England fifteen years ago, republican sentiments were freely expressed to me. I should probably hear

none now. Men's minds seem to be returning to severer principles of government; and this country is responsible for a part of this change. It is believed abroad, that property is less secure among us, order less stable, law less revered, social ties more easily broken, religion less enforced, life held less sacred, than in other countries. Undoubtedly the prejudices of foreign nations, the interests of foreign governments, have led to gross exaggeration of evils here. The least civilized parts of the country are made to represent the whole, and occasional atrocities are construed into habits. But who does not feel, that we have given cause of reproach? and shall we fix this reproach, and exasperate it into indignation and hatred, by adopting a policy against which the moral sentiments of the Christian world revolt? Shall we make the name of republic "a stench in the nostrils" of all nations, by employing our power to build up and spread slavery, by resisting the efforts of other countries for its abolition, by falling behind monarchies in reverence for the rights of men?

When we look forward to the probable growth of this country; when we think of the millions of human beings who are to spread over our present territory; of the career of improvement and glory opened to this new people; of the impulses which free institutions, if prosperous, may be expected to give to philosophy, religion, science, literature, and arts; of the vast field in which the experiment is to be made of what the unfettered powers of man may achieve; of the bright page of history which our fathers have filled, and of the advantages under which their toils and virtues have placed us for carrying on their work; when we think of all this, can we help for a moment surrendering ourselves to bright visions of our country's glory, before which all the glories of the past are to fade away? Is it presumption to say, that, if just to ourselves and all nations, we shall be

felt through this whole continent, that we shall spread our language, institutions, and civilization through a wider space than any nation has yet filled with a like beneficent influence? And are we prepared to barter these hopes, this sublime moral empire, for conquests by force? Are we prepared to sink to the level of unprincipled nation to content ourselves with a vulgar, guilty greatness, to adopt in our youth maxims and ends which must brand our future with sordidness, oppression, and shame? This country cannot without peculiar infamy run the common race of national rapacity. Our origin, institutions, and position are peculiar, and all favor an upright, honorable course. We have not the apologies of nations hemmed in by narrow bounds or threatened by the overshadowing power of ambitious neighbors. If we surrender ourselves to a selfish policy, we shall sin almost without temptation, and forfeit opportunities of greatness vouchsafed to no other people, for a prize below contempt.

I have alluded to the want of wisdom with which we are accustomed to speak of our destiny as a people. We are *destined* (that is the word) to overspread North America; and, intoxicated with the idea, it matters little to us how we accomplish our fate. To spread, to supplant others, to cover a boundless space, this seems our ambition, no matter what influence we spread with us. Why cannot we rise to noble conceptions of our destiny? Why do we not feel, that our work as a nation is, to carry freedom, religion, science, and a nobler form of human nature over this continent; and why do we not remember, that to diffuse these blessings we must first cherish them in our own borders; and that whatever deeply and permanently corrupts us will make our spreading influence a curse, not a blessing, to this new world? It is a common idea in Europe, that we are destined to spread an inferior civilization over North America; that our slavery

and our absorption in gain and outward interests mark us out, as fated to fall behind the old world in the higher improvements of human nature, in the philosophy, the refinements, the enthusiasm of literature and the arts which throw a lustre round older countries. I am not prophet enough to read our fate. I believe, indeed, that we are to make our futurity for ourselves. I believe, that a nation's destiny lies in its character, in the principles which govern its policy and bear rule in the hearts of its citizens. I take my stand on God's moral and eternal law. A nation renouncing and defying this cannot be free, cannot be great.

Religious men in this community, and they are many, are peculiarly bound to read the future history of their country, not in the flattering promises of politicians, but in the warnings of conscience and in the declaration of God's word. They know and should make it known, that nations cannot consolidate free institutions and secure a lasting prosperity by crime. They know, that retribution awaits communities as well as individuals; and they should tremble amidst their hopes, when, with this solemn truth on their minds, they look round on their country. Let them consider the clearness with which God's will is now made known, and the signal blessings of his Providence poured out on this people, with a profusion accorded to no other under heaven; and then let them consider our ingratitude for his boundless gifts, our abuse of his beneficence to sensual and selfish gratification, our unmeasured, unrighteous love of gain, our unprincipled party-spirit, and our faithless and cruel wrongs toward the Indian race; and can they help fearing, that the cup of wrath is filling for this people? Men, buried in themselves and in outward interests, atheists in heart and life, may scoff at the doctrine of national retribution, because they do not see God's hand stretched out to destroy guilty communities. — But does not all history teach,

that the unlicensed passions of a guilty people are more terrible ministers of punishment than miraculous inflictions ? To chastise and destroy, God needs not interfere by supernatural judgments. In every community, there are elements of discord, revolution, and ruin, pent up in the human soul, which need only to be quickened and set free by a new order of events, to shake and convulse the whole social fabric. Never were the causes of disastrous change in human affairs more active than at the present moment. Society heaves and trembles from the struggle of opposing principles, as the earth quakes through the force of central fires. This is not the time for presumption, for defying Heaven by new crimes, for giving a new range to cupidity and ambition. Men who fear God must fear for their country, in this "day of provocation," and they will be false to their country, if they look on passively, and see without remonstrance the consummation of a great national crime which cannot fail to bring down awful retribution.

I am aware that there are those, who, on reading these pages, will smile at my simplicity in urging moral and religious motives, disinterested considerations, lofty aims, on a politician. The common notion is, that the course of a man embarked in public life will be shaped by the bearings of passing events on his immediate popularity ; that virtue and freedom, however they may round his periods in the senate, have little influence on his vote. But I do not believe, that public life is necessarily degrading, or that a statesman is incapable of looking above himself. Public life appeals to the noblest, as well as basest principles of human nature. It holds up for pursuit enduring fame, as well as the notoriety of the passing hour. By giving opportunities of acting on the vast and permanent interests of a nation, it often creates a deep sense of responsibility, and a generous self-oblivion. I have too much faith in human nature to distrust the influence of

great truths and high motives on any class of men, especially on men of commanding intelligence. There is a congeniality between vast powers of thought and dignity of purpose. None are so capable of sacrificing themselves as those who have most to sacrifice; who, in offering themselves, make the greatest offerings to humanity. With this conviction, I am not discouraged by the anticipated smiles and scoffs of those, who will think that in insisting on national purity as the essential condition of freedom and greatness, I have "preached" to the winds. To you, Sir, rectitude is not an empty name, nor will a measure, fraught with lasting corruption and shame to your country, seem to you any thing but a fearful calamity.

I have now finished the task which I have felt myself bound to undertake. That I have escaped all error, I cannot hope. That I may have fallen into occasional exaggeration, I ought perhaps to fear from the earnestness with which I have written. But of the essential truth of the views here communicated, I cannot doubt. It is exceedingly to be regretted, that the subject of this letter has as yet drawn little attention at the North. The unprecedented pecuniary difficulties, pressing now on the country, have absorbed the public mind. And yet these difficulties, should they be aggravated and continued far beyond what is most dreaded, would be a light national evil, compared with the annexation of Texas to the Union. I trust the people will not slumber on the edge of this precipice, till it shall be too late to reflect and provide for safety. Too much time has been given for the ripening of this unrighteous project. I doubt not, as I have said, that opposition exists to it in the slaveholding states. This, if manifested in any strength, would immediately defeat it. The other states should raise a voice against it, like the voice of many waters. Party dissensions should be swallowed up in this vast common interest.

The will of the people, too strong and fixed to be resisted, should be expressed to Congress, in remonstrances from towns, cities, counties, and Legislatures. Let no man, who feels the greatness of the evil which threatens us, satisfy himself with unprofitable regrets ; but let each embody his opposition in a form which will give incitements to his neighbors, and act on men in power.

I take it for granted, that those who differ from me will ascribe what I have written to unworthy motives. This is the common mode of parrying unwelcome truths ; and it is not without influence, where the author is unknown. May I then be allowed to say, that I have strong reasons for believing, that, among the many defects of this letter, those of unworthy intention are not to be numbered. The reluctance with which I have written satisfies me, that I have not been impelled by any headlong passion. Nor can I have been impelled by party spirit. I am pledged to no party. In truth, I do not feel myself able to form a decisive opinion on the subjects, which now inflame and divide the country, and which can be very little understood except by men who have made a study of commerce and finance. As to having written from that most common motive, the desire of distinction, I may be permitted to say, that, to win the public ear, I need not engage in a controversy which will expose me to unmeasured reproach. May I add, that I have lived long enough to learn the worth of applause. Could I indeed admit the slightest hope of securing to myself that enduring fame, which future ages award to the lights and benefactors of their race, I could not but be stirred by the prospect. But notoriety among contemporaries, obtained by taking part in the irritating discussions of the day, I would not stretch out a hand to secure.

I cannot but fear, that the earnestness with which I have written may seem to indicate an undue excitement of

mind. But I have all along felt distinctly the importance of calmness, and have seemed to myself to maintain it. I have prepared this letter, not amidst the goadings, irritations, and feverish tumults of a crowded city, but in the stillness of retirement, amid scenes of peace and beauty. Hardly an hour has passed, in which I have not sought relief from the exhaustion of writing, by walking abroad amidst God's works, which seldom fail to breathe tranquillity, and which, by their harmony and beneficence, continually cheer me, as emblems and prophecies of a more harmonious and blessed state of human affairs than has yet been known. Perhaps some will object it to me, that a man, living in such retirement, unsits himself to judge of passing events, that he is prone to substitute his visions for realities, and to legislate for a world which does not exist. I acknowledge the danger of such a position. On the other hand, it is equally true, that the man, who lives in a crowd and receives perpetual impulse from its prejudices and passions, who connects himself with a party and looks to it for reward, cannot easily keep his mind open to truth, or sacrifice the interests of the moment to everlasting principles, and the enduring welfare of his country. Everywhere our frail nature is severely tried. All circumstances have their perils. In every condition, there are biases to wrong judgment and incitements to wrong action. Through such discipline, we are to make our way to truth and perfection. The dread of these must not keep us inactive. Having sought to understand the difficulties in our respective paths, and having done what we can to learn the truth, we must commit ourselves to our convictions without fear, expressing them in word and action, and leaving results to Him, who will accept our pure purpose, and whose providence is the pledge of the ultimate triumphs of humanity and uprightness.

You and I, my dear Sir, are approaching that period of life, when the passions lose much of their force, when disappointment, bereavement, the fall of our contemporaries on the right hand and the left, and long experience of the emptiness of human favor and of the instability of all earthly goods, are teaching us the lofty lessons of superiority to the fleeting opinion of our day, of reliance on the everlasting law of Right, of reference to a Higher Judge than man, of solemn anticipation of a final account. Permit me to close this letter, with desiring for you in your commanding station, what I ask for myself in private life, that may be faithful to ourselves, to our country, to mankind, to the benevolent principles of the Christian faith, and to the common Father of the whole human race.

Very respectfully,

Your friend and servant,

WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

Newport, R. I., August 1, 1837.

NOTE.

A FEW remarks, which have been suggested since the completion of the preceding letter, I shall throw into a note.

The recognition of the Independence of Texas by our government, is to be lamented, as unbecomingly hasty, and as a violation of the principle adopted by Mr. Monroe, in regard to the Spanish colonies. "These new states," he says, "had completely established their independence, before we acknowledged them." We have recognised Texas as a nation, having all the attributes of sovereignty, and competent to the discharge of all the obligations of an independent state. And what is Texas? A collection of a few settlements, which would vanish at once, were a Mexican army of any force to enter the country. One decisive victory would scatter all Texas like a horde of Tartars, and not a trace of its institutions and population would remain. We have been accustomed to think of a nation as something permanent, as having some fixtures, some lasting bond of union. There would be nothing to hold Texas together, were her single, small army to be routed in one battle. To send a minister plenipotentiary to such a handful of people, made up chiefly of our own citizens, is to degrade the forms of national intercourse. This new republic, with its President and diplomatic corps, has been called a Farce. But the tragic element prevails so much over the farcical in this whole business, that we cannot laugh at it. The movements of our government in regard to Texas are chiefly interesting, as they are thought to indicate a disposition favorable to its annexation to our country. But we will not believe, that the government is resolved on this great wrong, unless we are compelled so to do. We hope, that the present administration will secure the confidence of good men by well considered and upright measures, looking beyond

momentary interests to the lasting peace, order, and strength of the country.

There is another objection to the annexation of Texas, which, after our late experience, is entitled to attention. This possession will involve us in new Indian wars. Texas, besides being open to the irruption of the tribes within our territories, has a tribe of its own, the Camanches, which is described as more formidable than any in North America. Such foes are not to be coveted. The Indians! that ominous word, which ought to pierce the conscience of this nation, more than the savage war-cry pierces the ear. The Indians! Have we not inflicted and endured evil enough in our intercourse with this wretched people, to abstain from new wars with them? Is the tragedy of Florida to be acted again and again in our own day, and in our children's?

In addition to what I have said of the constitutional objections to the annexation of Texas to our country, I would observe, that we may infer, from the history and language of the Constitution, that our national Union was so far from being intended to spread slavery over new countries, that, had the possibility of such a result been anticipated, decided provisions would have been introduced for its prevention. It is worthy of remark, how anxious the framers of that instrument were to exclude from it the word Slavery. They were not willing, that this feature of our social system should be betrayed in the construction of our free government. A stranger might read it, without suspecting the existence of this institution among us. Were slavery to be wholly abolished here, no change would be needed in the constitution, nor would any part become obsolete, except an obscure clause, which, in apportioning the representatives, provides that there shall be added to the whole number of free persons "three-fifths of other persons." Slavery is studiously thrown into the back ground. How little did our forefathers suppose, that it was to become a leading interest of the government, to which our peace at home and abroad was to be made a sacrifice!

I have said, that I desire no political Union with communities bent on spreading and perpetuating slavery. It is hardly necessary to observe, that this was not intended to express a desire to decline friendly intercourse with the members of those communities. Individuals, who have re-

ceived from their ancestors some pernicious prejudice or institution, may still, in their general spirit, be disinterested and just. Our testimony against the wrong which such men practice is not to be stifled or impaired by the feelings of interest or attachment which they inspire ; nor, on the other hand, must this wrong be spread by our imaginations over their whole characters, so as to seem their sole attribute, and so as to hide all their claims to regard. In an age of reform, one of the hardest duties is, to be inflexibly hostile to the long rooted corruptions of society, and at the same time to be candid and just to those who uphold them. It is true, that, with the most friendly feelings, we shall probably give offence to those, who are interested in abuses which we condemn. But we are not on this account absolved from the duty of cultivating and expressing kindness and justice, of laying strong restraint on our passions, and of avoiding all needless provocation.

The speech of Mr. Adams on the subject of the preceding letter, delivered in Congress, December 1835, should be republished and circulated. It deserves to be read as a specimen of parliamentary eloquence ; and its moral and political views are worthy of its eminent author.

There seems to be an apprehension at the South, that the free states, should they obtain the ascendancy, might be disposed to use the powers of the government for the abolition of slavery. On this point, there is but one feeling at the North. The free states feel, that they have no more right to abolish slavery in the slaveholding states, than in a foreign country. They regard the matter as wholly out of their reach. They indeed claim the right of setting forth the evils of slavery, as of any other pernicious and morally wrong institution. But the thought of touching the laws which establish it in any state, they reject without a discordant voice. In regard to the District of Columbia, many of us feel, that slavery continues there by the action of *all* the states, that the free states, therefore, are responsible for it ; and we maintain that it is most unreasonable, that an institution should be sustained by those who hold it to be immoral and pernicious. But we feel no such responsibility for slavery in the slaveholding states. These states must determine for themselves how long it shall continue, and by what means it shall be abolished. We solemnly

urge them to use their power for its removal; but nothing would tempt us to wrest the power from them, if we could. The South has fears, that the free states may be hurried away by "enthusiasm" into usurpation of unconstitutional powers on the subject. One is tempted to smile at the want of acquaintance with the North, which such an apprehension betrays. This enthusiasm, to endanger the South, must spread through all the free states; for as the slaveholders are unanimous, nothing but a like unanimity in their opponents can expose them to harm. And is it possible, that a large number of communities, spread over a vast surface, having a diversity of interests, and all absorbed in the pursuit of gain to a degree, perhaps, without a parallel, should be driven by a moral, philanthropic enthusiasm, into violations of a national compact, by which their peace and prosperity would be put in peril, and into combined and lawless efforts against other communities, with whom they sustain exceedingly profitable connexions, and from whom they could not be sundered without serious loss? Whoever is acquainted with the free states knows, that the excesses, to which they are exposed, are not so much those of enthusiasm, as of caution and worldly prudence. The patience with which they have endured recent violent measures directed against their citizens shows little propensity to rashness. The danger is, not so much that they will invade the rights of other members of the confederacy, as that they will be indifferent to their own.

I have spoken in this letter of the estimation in which this country is held abroad. I hope I shall not be numbered among those, too common here, who are irritably alive to the opinions of other nations, to the censures and misrepresentations of travellers. To a great and growing people, how insignificant is the praise or blame of a traveller on a nation. "None of these things move me." But one thing does move me. It is a sore evil that freedom should be blasphemed, that republican institutions should forfeit the confidence of mankind, through the unfaithfulness of this people to their trust.

In reviewing this letter, I perceive that I have used the strong language, in which the apprehension of great evils naturally expresses itself. I hope this will not be construed as betokening any anxieties or misgivings in regard to the

issues of passing events: I place a cheerful trust in Providence. The triumphs of evil, which men call great, are but clouds passing over the serene and everlasting heavens. Public men may, in drift or passion, decree violence and oppression. But silently, irresistibly, they and their works are swept away. A sense of encouragement comes to us from the ruins of the past, from the humiliations of the proud, from the prostrate thrones of conquerors, from the baffled schemes of statesmen, from the reprobation with which the present age looks back on the unrighteous policy of former times. Such sentence the future will pass on present wrongs. Men, measures, and all earthly interests pass away; but Principles are Eternal. Truth, justice, and goodness partake of the omnipotence and immutability of God, whose servants they are. In these, it becomes us to place a calm, joyful trust, in the darkest hour.